

THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO



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NEWS RELEASE

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Over 200 Attend City Heights Community Convention Sponsored By Councilmember Atkins and OLSH Organizing Ministry

Mid-City Residents Given Opportunity To Meet With Councilmember, Police Chief, City Staff and Local Organizations To Discuss Neighborhood Issues

SAN DIEGO -- More than 200 Mid-City residents turned out Thursday night for the City Heights Community Convention, a community forum co-sponsored by Third District City Councilmember Toni Atkins and the Our Lady of the Sacred Heart (OLSH) Organizing Ministry aimed at bringing government, social service organizations and residents together to solve neighborhood issues. The convention, held in the main hall at OLSH, was suggested by Councilmember Atkins as a follow-up to a community convention held last October.

"I made a commitment to return to City Heights to continue to listen to the community," Atkins told those gathered during her opening remarks. "We had a very productive meeting in October, and it was clear to me that the community had concerns that were not addressed. Today I have brought my team and have invited city staff from various departments."

Joining Atkins at the event were members of her Third District staff, along with San Diego Chief of Police William Lansdowne, SDPD Captain Robert Kanaski and City Heights Community Relations Officer Jim Tulumello. Also present from the city were Rudy Hernandez from Mayor Sanders' office, Kristin Beattie from the City Attorney's office, Curtis Hussey and Al Stasukevich from the Neighborhood Code Compliance Department, and General Services Director Mario Sierra and members of his street, traffic and environmental services divisions.

Both Councilmember Atkins and Police Chief Lansdowne briefly addressed the attendees before turning the program over to Ana Gonzalez of the OLSH Organizing Ministry, who explained how the convention would function. At the conclusion of the formal remarks, residents were then given the bulk of the convention program time to meet one-on-one with the councilmember and her staff, police chief and his staff, city department staff members and representatives from numerous social service agencies, each of whom were placed at tables ringing the perimeter of the hall.

"I am optimistic that this convention will allow you to build a relationship with the staff and

organizations that are here to serve you, and I encourage you to start a dialog with them," said Atkins

The social service organizations present offered attendees a wide range of counseling options. Urban Corps handled the issue of graffiti control, the San Diego Hunger Coalition fielded questions on food stamps and offered Volunteer Income Tax Assistance, United Way/Home Start assisted with Earned Income Tax Credits, and La Maestra Community Clinic dealt with issues surrounding MediCal and Healthy Families. Additionally, the City Heights Business Association offered small business advice, Mid-City CAN was represented by their Employee Rights Center, the Mexican Consulate dealt with immigration issues, and Community Housing Works counseled on tenants' rights, home ownership potential and financial readiness.

"It is especially important at this time, given the financial constraints and limited resources of the City of San Diego, that we work together to make our community a better place to live," Atkins concluded. "The wonderful turnout tonight proves to me that we can do this--that together we can create and find solutions to make City Heights an enjoyable place for people to live, work and play."

The program was translated into Spanish, and representatives from the San Diego Organizing Project were on hand to help direct community members to the appropriate tables and translate for them when discussing their issues.

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